



**hardship
post**

**interview
with
sebastian
lippa**

Do you want to maybe talk about how you got into music in the first place and what your early days were like in the music scene?

I was playing music as a hobby, so I learned how to play guitar at ten, and I started playing with friends, garage bands, and it probably wouldn't have gone any further than that, only that the timing of our garage band connected with the rise of grunge and alternative rock being— there was some money behind it. So there was a lot of bands like ours that had opportunity to— Sloan's agent called me up after we'd just done a demo and then offers to play shows and so on. I mean, I think all of that was in the wake of some of the— Sloan had been signed to Geffen. Eric's trip and Jale had been signed to Sub Pop. We just finished our demo tape. So all this stuff is happening, so that was how our band went from just a couple of guys doing that for fun. It could have been skateboarding, it could have been anything, and then it turning into something that we did in a more— it ended up being kind of professional.

So you guys started in St John's, right? That's right. **I was wondering, I was watching an interview that you guys did, it was the New Music special.** Yeah, that was cool. **Yeah. The interviewer asked "If you guys got a record deal, would you stay based in Newfoundland?" And you go, "Definitely" [laugh] and that made me laugh really hard—** Right, 'cause the— **'cause that didn't happen. Yeah. Yeah. So what made you guys move to Halifax?**

Well, that connection with Sloan's manager is Peter Rowan[. . .]. So yeah, Peter called us. At the time, he was Sloan's manager, shortly after he ended up not being Sloan's manager, but he was Eric's Trip's manager as well. The move to Halifax was, I mean, personally, I was 21 years old and I was living with my parents still. So I was looking for an excuse to move out of the house and moving to Halifax was even better, and when we moved, there was no thought of how long it would be. It made sense at the time. I loved living in Halifax, I think we all did and it's a wonderful city and it worked out really well for us, for our band[. . .].

What do you think made Halifax such a tight knit scene? Because looking into other scenes across Canada, I feel like Halifax was unique in that it felt especially tight knit and everyone was friends with each other.

“I really am not in touch at all with what the scene is like, say, in Vancouver right now, but I can almost guarantee it wouldn't be like that where people are going to be living here and there wherever they can find a space and you're not going to stumble out of your house and bump into all your buddies at the restaurant

“...maybe two weeks before the tour was about to start[. . .], we kicked out our drummer with no backup drummer lined up or anything.

It really was. Yeah, it's an interesting thing. That even connects to my current world, my life now as a city planner, because what combination of factors comes together. There's obviously some luck or specific things, like a band as talented as Sloan doesn't come around every day. They were a real organizing principle because they had a record label. Even though they were not, at that point, were technically based in Toronto and a couple of them I think were living full time. I know Andrew was living there full time, but a few of them were living in Halifax for part of the time. So they still had the members of Sloan, and especially Mordere records was in Sloan, like they had an office in Halifax, and they were putting out records by a bunch of us, and being a small city, but it gave this opportunity to a bunch of local groups, and there was different genres. I think there was the art school connection as well, so that was a cross-pollinating thing. So lots of people with cross-disciplinary which is healthy. Housing, affordable housing so people could live. We were all living downtown near the clubs, near where we played, near the venues, the practice spaces. We just lived near each other, we worked near each other. You compare that to if you're in a bigger

city or—I really am not in touch at all with what the scene is like, say, in Vancouver right now, but I can almost guarantee it wouldn't be like that where people are going to be living here and there wherever they can find a space and you're not going to stumble out of your house and bump into all your buddies at the restaurant. I'm guessing it would be quite a bit different. The housing thing alone, if you could see the apartment I moved into when I first moved to Halifax, it's seriously the nicest place I've ever lived in. It was incredible, like this old Victorian place, three-storey walk-up. We had this spectacular second floor corner suite with a big balcony. It's been torn down, but it was just so cool and everyone had really great accommodation, and Eve from Jale was a roommate at the time as well in that place. So in that building there was members of other bands and people lived so close to one another.

I was also wondering about the end of Hardship Post because I was listening to an interview that Peter Rowan did and he was talking about, and I'm going to quote him directly here, he said, “Seb realized that this wasn't really the life he was looking for and became a little hesitant about everything”. How basically you ended things and it was a bit of a shambolic ending. Could you talk about why you didn't want to be in the music business anymore and how you ended the band?

Sure, yeah. It was a drawn out collapse because we recorded our album, the Sub Pop record [*Somebody Spoke*], that was in December, and then the record came out

“

I was never someone who was like, “I’m going to be a musician when I grow up.” It was just this hobby that ended up turning into something bigger because of what was happening.

in May and that was lined up with a big North American tour with Zumpano and Six Finger Satellite and I would say, maybe two weeks before the tour was about to start, it might have been two weeks or [laugh] it might have been even less. I forget. But we kicked out our drummer with no backup drummer lined up or anything. So Mike, our bass player, who was pretty decent on drums and liked playing drums, he was like, "I'm going to play drums". So we went out as a two piece, so you can imagine, that's with no bass, right? It's with a three piece, you're really changing the music. So that was the first thing that happened, so we came back off of the tour and we're trying to find a third member. We're trying out different drummers and it wasn't really clicking.

Could I ask why you guys kicked out the drummer?

Oh, kicked out Matt? **Yeah.** Yeah. It was a combination of we just weren't getting along, like we'd just finished a tour before in the spring. I guess that would have been in April or something like that. March, April. And we just had a brutal time. He seemed to really not be having any fun at all with us, with me and Mike, and Mike and I were still getting along really well personally and especially musically. We were really on the same page and Matt was just not on the same page with us. So Mike and I thought "We've got to move on from this guy". So it was like that. I think neither of us could imagine spending a month on the road with him because he was so miserable on the tour we'd just finished. So in that sense, it was probably the right call because we had a blast on that tour [laugh] with just the two of us. So when we came back from the tour, we started playing with Alyson MacLeod, who is from Jale, because she

had quit Jale and wanting to do her own thing and that was pretty great actually, the music we were doing was neat. It was the three of us and then we were still trying to find a drummer. Alyson was the drummer in Jale, but didn't want to play drums in this band, and Mike didn't want to play drums either because he's a bass player. Although, we were all taking turns when the three of us would play, when we'd jam and record, but we were like, "We need a fourth person here" and couldn't find one in Halifax, and

"...we were really into Fleetwood Mac, especially the Tusk album. I was totally obsessed with that record, and Alyson was quite into that and it naturally had a bit of a Christine McVie kind of vibe."

at the same time I was feeling like maybe it's time for me to try something different, and I had a real interest in going back and doing liberal arts at university. So I signed up to King's, which is the liberal arts college at Dalhousie. It kind of ties back to how we got into music in the first place, just this opportunity that fell in our laps. I was never someone who was like, "I'm going to be a musician when I grow up." It was just this hobby that ended up turning into something bigger because of what was happening. It was kind of easy to walk away from for me.

I also read on your guys' Wikipedia that there is a second album that you guys recorded and then it was never released?

Yeah, which is too bad because that was good. That was good stuff. I'm not a huge fan of what we put out on Sub Pop, but I thought that what we were doing with Alyson, that was like, if you heard it now it's still super raw and not that great, but I thought it was a step up and we were really into, it sounds maybe corny now, but at the time it was a bit more like— we were really into Fleetwood Mac, especially the *Tusk* album. I was totally obsessed with that record, and Alyson was quite into that and it naturally had a bit of a Christine McVie kind-of vibe. So we were doing that, this kind of soft rock indie thing, which not everyone was doing at the time. It was a little vein that we were moving in that I think could have been interesting, so there's some demos. The demos are out there from that and that's what that references to.

I was listening to the *Hack* EP and immediately when I listened to it, I got reminded of the Murder Records 1994 sketch where Patrick— [Laugh] right— confuses Thrush Hermit for Hardship Post and Chris pokes fun at you going like, "With his limited range, it should be like this", and they're pretending to write that song. [Laugh] I was just wondering if he ran that joke by you?

Are you kidding? That guy? [Laugh] No, he's so funny. **Yeah.** He can for sure be cutting but I have no problem with that. "My limited vocal range" is pretty funny.

[Laugh]. It's such a nerdy musical, or like a musician joke [laugh]. I do stay in touch with Chris from Sloan and Andrew because they're in town so much.

Pivoting more into the visual side of your band, I was wondering, what was the relationship between visual designers and musicians, both in your band in the scene in general? I was looking at some of the artwork from your albums and I saw that a guy named Peter Evans did the painting on the back of the "Sugar-cane / Canopy" single, and then Hank Trotter designed a few of the singles. It seemed like you guys—

Oh, yeah. Hank Trotter, he was with Sub Pop, right? **Yeah.** Yeah, that's right. I remember his name. Yeah, he did all their stuff. I'm not a visual artist, but there's a bunch of visual artists that— like, the Sloan guys, two of them were in NSCAD doing visual arts. Andrew, he still does, like the Arkells new record has got his cover art and so on. From day one with Sloan, their background in visual arts was a big part of their whole image. Chris is almost obsessive with the— he learned about film and videos, and to say nothing about the cover art, which you can tell they obsess over. And then Eric's trip as well, Rick is more (an) outsider artist but he painstakingly worked on their image. All the cover art for Eric's Trip, Elevator and all that stuff. So that was kind of a bar, and it's funny you should ask that, Violeta, because when I was self reflecting about should I stay in music or not, I looked around at some of these folks who had this all-comprehensive vision, people like Rick and Chris, and I was like, "I'm just

“...it was interesting to me to be in this world where there was this intermingling between music and visual arts and feeling like that wasn't me

not like that”. I'm like, “I'm kind of into this”, but these guys, they're properly obsessed and you can hear it in the music. It's like, that's who should be doing this. I felt like a tourist, with that whole visual side of it as being an example of— and now I think that's a bit unfair. I think there obviously would be tons of musicians who are brilliant and have zero interest in the visual side, but it was interesting to me to be in this world where there was this intermingling between music and visual arts and feeling like that wasn't me.

This is kind of a sidenote, random question. I found your Spotify account and I was looking at your— You have a Spotify, right? You're public? Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I was looking through your playlists and I got really excited [laugh] because you seem to be really into experimental rap— Yeah— and all these strange artists, like really cool artists. I was wondering, I know that there was a lot of intersection between the rock scene and the hip hop scene back then. I was wondering if you were into hip hop back then as well and if you— Yeah, I was.— were involved in that aspect of it.

That question touches on a real important thing on my decision to leave music, because I felt like my musical abilities were like, I can do this [gestures a small circle with his hands] but over time where I was like, "Oh, I'm so into rap music" and I really got into R&B soul music, and back in the mid-nineties and my interest in alternative music, the stuff that I was doing, I didn't find a way to make it interesting for myself, which is too bad because there was a way, obviously, there is definitely a way that I could have found, but it wasn't apparent to me and then having other things I wanted

“...I really got into R&B soul music, and back in the mid nineties and my interest in alternative music, the stuff that I was doing, I didn't find a way to make it interesting for myself

to do. I mean, that was the golden age of hip hop. So one of the labels that was courting us before we signed to Sub Pop was Epic Records, and they were one of those labels (where) they're all owned by several labels or several labels are all owned by the same company. So the A&R guy who is now with Sub Pop, or at least he was the last I saw, but he sent me as part of his wooing of us, sent to me a huge box of CDs out of their store room and stuff that their labels would put out, and stuff that

had come out that year. You just imagine, it was like Nas' *Illmatic* and Gravediggaz and Warren G, I listened a lot to [laugh] Warren G. Mobb Deep, did I already mention them? So all of that stuff that was just around. It's kind of mind blowing. Stinkin' Rich, Rich Terfry was a buddy in the scene. I liked him, I liked what he did, but I didn't know anything about underground hip hop. Zero. And I didn't really like underground hip hop too much at that time because that mainstream stuff was so damn cool, but I wish I'd gotten— there would have been so much interesting stuff that if— Rich was in tune with what (he) would play on his radio show. But anyway, you were asking about the connection with hip hop and our— **Your scene, yeah.**— Yeah. It was very minor in Halifax, although Sixtoo ended up putting out stuff on Ninja Tune which I think we were all pretty impressed by.

I have one more question, just a silly question. In the New Music interview that you guys did, you also joked about how you wrote a song about how your pet iguana died. Did you actually have a pet iguana or no?

Yeah. Oh, yeah. **You did!** Yeah. **Wow, rest in peace [laugh].** I don't remember what that song was. It was one that thankfully it didn't— we didn't carry forward [both laugh].

